Andover Newton Theological Library
Newton Centre
Massachusetts

Mr. *BALDWIN*'s

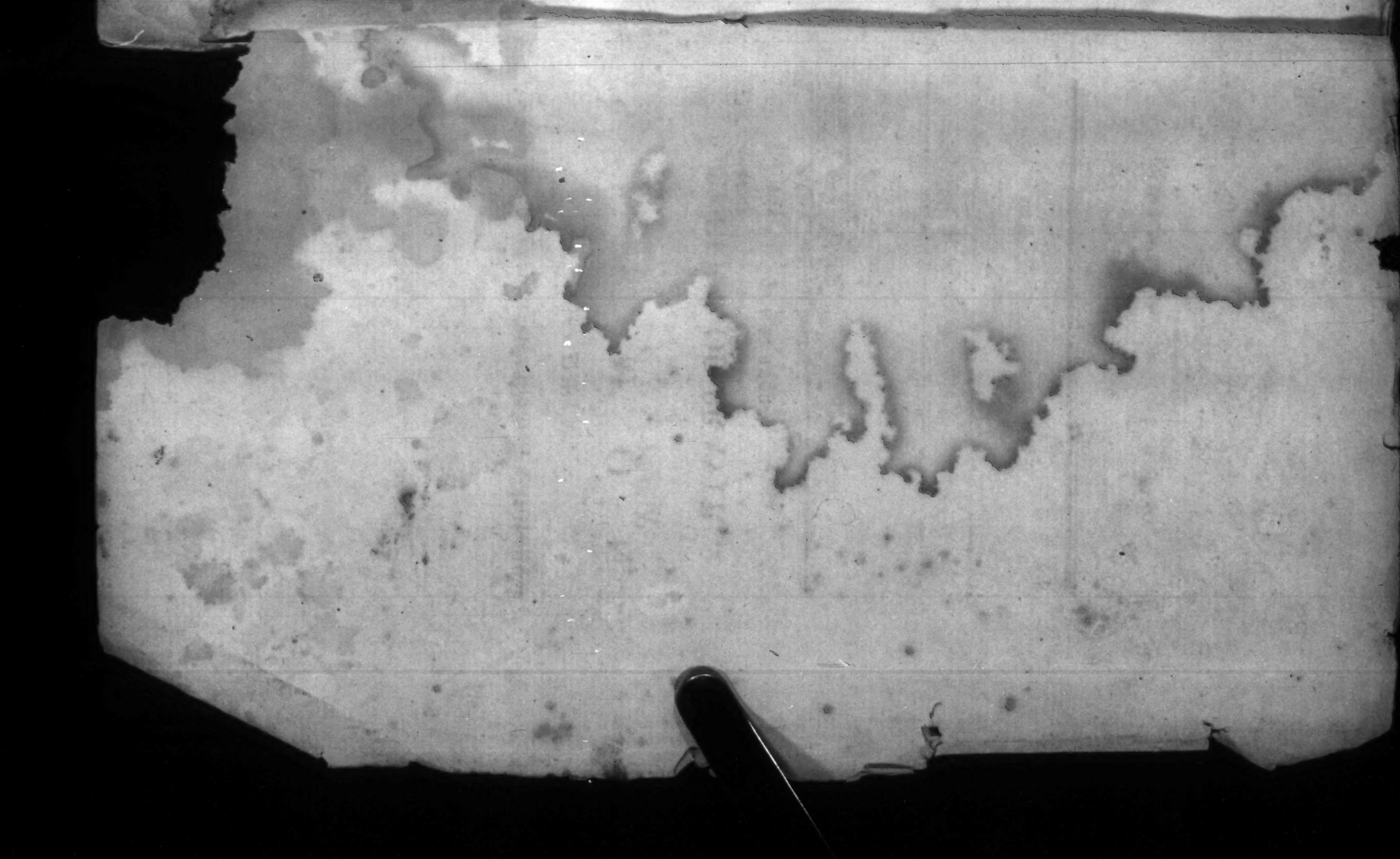
SERMON,

AT THE

CONCERT OF PRAYER,

April 2, 1799.

3679



A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT *BOSTON*,

ON TUESDAY, *April* 2, 1799;

AT A

Quarterly Meeting of ſeveral Churches

FOR

SPECIAL PRAYER.

By THOMAS BALDWIN, *A. M.*
Paſtor of the Second Baptiſt Church in Boston.

Publiſhed by deſire of many who heard it.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY MANNNING & LORING.

1799.

A

SERMON.

ISAIAH xliii. 12, 13.

——Ye are my witneſſes, ſaith the LORD, *that I am* GOD. *Yea, before the day was, I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. I will work, and who ſhall let it?*

A FIRM belief in the exiſtence, perfections, and providence of GOD, is always to be conſidered as a firſt principle in religion. Where this belief is wanting, there is no rational ground to expect either virtue or morality. Every violation of the moral law, every ſecret or open ſin, is a practical denial of the divine authority. And the moſt prominent features in the character of the bold tranſgreſſor, are his diſbelief of the omniſciency of GOD, and of his own future accountability. Concealed from the obſervation of man, he is ready to aſk, "How doth GOD know? and is there knowledge in the Moſt High? Can I be amenable at his dread tribunal?"

BUT however the practice of mankind may argue againſt their religious principles, (for the mind often aſſents to what the practice denies) we have been unwilling to believe that there were any, or at moſt but very few, who were ſo ſhockingly impious and abſurd, as profeſſedly to deny the being and providence of GOD. In this country, until very lately,

an abſolute, profeſſed atheiſt, was almoſt as rare, and would perhaps have excited as much aſtoniſhment, as the tranſit of a comet. But infidelity and atheiſm are now throwing off the maſk, and are daring to appear with impious, brazen front, even at noon-day. Many others there are, as we have reaſon to ſuppoſe, who, notwithſtanding their profeſſions of friendſhip, are ſecretly abetting the ſame wretched cauſe. Theſe diſguiſe the malignity of their hearts, under a baſe inſidious ſmile, and, Judas-like, are endeavouring to betray the deareſt intereſts of religion with a deceitful kiſs.

It is truly affecting to a pious mind, to ſee with what avidity, deiſtical, and even ſome atheiſtical publications, have been received of late among us. Is it not ſeriouſly to be feared, that many of our thoughtleſs, unſuſpecting youth, have already caught the impious contagion? A contagion, in my opinion, much more to be dreaded than the moſt fatal epidemic; for, while the latter deſtroys the body, and hath no more that it can do, the former diſſolves the bonds of ſocial union, corrupts morality, debauches virtue, and ruins the ſoul forever!

These things may ſeem to lower with gloomy aſpect upon the cauſe of religion. But amidſt this darkneſs, "light is ſown for the righteous, and joy for the upright." For "when the enemy ſhall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord ſhall lift up a ſtandard againſt him." "In that day there ſhall be a Root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an enſign of the people; to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be glorious." Around this ſacred ſtandard, like the ancient Hebrews around the tabernacle in the wilderneſs, will every true Iſraelite pitch his tent. Here will they ſet up their banners in the name of the Lord, and in the ſtrength of the great Jehovah they will put to flight the whole camp of infidelity.

But ſhould dark clouds gather round us; ſhould we ſee iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold; ſhould Zion's ways ſtill mourn because

ſo few come to her ſolemn feaſts; ſhould ſome depart from the Faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits and doctrines of devils; yet let us not think the cauſe loſt. This, perhaps this is the very time for GOD to work. He has a ſet time to favour Zion, and the text aſſures us that he will do it. "Ye are my witneſſes, ſaith the LORD, that I am GOD.——I will work, and who ſhall let it?"

IN order to ſtrengthen your faith in the certain accompliſhment of the declaration in the text, and to encourage one and all to become workers together with GOD, I propoſe,

I. To offer a few thoughts upon the character of Him who has ſaid, "I will work, and who ſhall let it?"

II. SHALL attempt to illuſtrate and diſtinguiſh the particular "work" intended in the text.

III. SHALL conſider the general, but ineffectual, oppoſition contemplated to this glorious work.

THE firſt part of our ſubject contains an appeal, to the ſentiments and feelings of all the friends of truth—"Ye are my witneſſes, ſaith the LORD, that I am GOD." But what are the facts to which we bear witneſs? We teſtify that HE IS, and that HE IS A REWARDER of all them that diligently ſeek him. That from everlaſting to everlaſting he is GOD. That he is the ſelf-exiſtent, the independent, the immutable JEHOVAH. That all the divine perfections centre and harmonize in his character. That he upholds and governs all worlds and all beings; and that his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands. That his providential care extends to all, even the meaneſt of his creatures.

THESE are facts of which we have the greateſt moral certainty. Yet, ſhould ſome bold ſceptic demand proof of his exiſtence, we might perhaps be at a loſs how to undertake it; not from the want of evidence, but from its exuberance. Should a man

ſhut his eyes, and deny the exiſtence of light, or demand evidence that the ſun ſhines, how ſhould we proceed in order to convince him? Should we appeal to the ſenſes of all mankind, who are daily bleſſed with his beams? Should we attempt in detail, all that rich variety of infinitely multiplied favours daily derived from this fountain of created goodneſs? No; we ſhould cut the work ſhort, and tell him to open his eyes, and he would find an immediate cure for his ſcepticiſm. May not the ſame be ſaid to the *atheiſt?* Let him become impartial but a ſingle moment, and he ſhall find all nature riſing in proof of the exiſtence of a GOD. Can we believe that man to be honeſtly inquiring after truth, who can find no evidence through the univerſe of a ſupreme, intelligent Firſt Cauſe? We certainly cannot: nor does reaſon or Chriſtian charity demand it of us.

MEN frequently embrace error, in order to get rid of the difficulties they meet with in vindicating the truth. On this ground, many have given up ſome of the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel: others have rejected Chriſtianity altogether; and ſome there are, who have given up natural as well as revealed religion, and denied the exiſtence of a GOD upon the ſame principle. But has atheiſm no difficulties in it? The material ſyſtem of the univerſe muſt either be conſidered as eternal, and conſequently ſelf-exiſtent, or it muſt have been created. But is there leſs difficulty in conceiving of the eternity of matter, than of the exiſtence and eternity of GOD? Is there no difficulty in accounting for the motion, order, and harmony of the heavenly bodies, without admitting the idea of a Supreme Intelligence? Surely there is; for matter of itſelf is inert, and incapable of originating the ſmalleſt motion. Deny the exiſtence of GOD, and you behold every where effects without a cauſe! order and harmony without deſign! Of all ſyſtems that were ever originated in the wild fancy of man, atheiſm is the moſt blaſphemous and abſurd.

THERE is evidently a ſtrong bias in mankind to novelty of opinion and ſentiment, as well as in other things. Hence many look back upon the pious ſentiments and godly zeal of their ancient ſires, and view them in the ſame whimſical light as they do their old-faſhioned pictures, and at once congratulate themſelves that they live in an age of much greater taſte and improvement. But, however modern times may boaſt of having improved in liberality of ſentiment, in ſcience and the fine arts—they certainly have very little to boaſt of, on account of religion and morality. I am at the ſame time ſenſible, that to ſome, this is looked upon as the golden age ſo long foretold by Grecian Bards. Thoſe halcyon days which were to bleſs the world, in their view, are faſt approaching! Reaſon's millennium has already commenced! They glory to think they have liberated the human mind from the reſtraints of religion, and from the fears of futurity. But this fatal liberty only permits the mind to fly like an unbalanced ſyſtem from its centre; to roam, in eternal uncertainty, through the wilderneſs of depraved reaſon; to be forever tormented in trying to believe what it is always afraid will finally prove true; to violate the ſacred principles of juſtice, of reaſon, and religion; to trample the goſpel under foot, and blaſpheme the name of GOD; to ſet at defiance all laws, human and divine; and, in a word, to proclaim open war with both heaven and earth! O Liberty! how is thy ſacred name proſtituted and profaned!

THAT there have been, in every age, a few ſolitary individuals who have denied the exiſtence of GOD, will be admitted; but that atheiſm ſhould be the profeſſed creed of any conſiderable number of the ruling party of any civilized nation, it is preſumed cannot be found in the hiſtory of the world, till near the cloſe of the eighteenth century. It is not to be concluded, however, that even in that nation every individual is an atheiſt, any more than we may conclude every man a Chriſtian who be-

longs to a Chriſtian country. There may be many there ſtill, who fear GOD and reverence his Son. Yet the wild project of thoſe mad philoſophiſts, to dethrone the Deity and reign themſelves, muſt be looked upon as the moſt bold and impious attack upon the throne of GOD, that has ever been made ſince the days of Nimrod. And even the attempt to build Babel is not, in my opinion, to be conſidered as an abſolute denial of the exiſtence of GOD; but rather as a diſtruſt of his providential goodneſs, and an ignorant, ſlaviſh fear of his almighty power.

SOON after the confuſion of tongues, we find idolatry introduced, or revived in the world: for ſome are of opinion that it exiſted before the flood; others ſuppoſe that it was firſt introduced by the *Phenicians*, and from them communicated to the *Egyptians* and the other neighbouring nations. But in that degenerated ſtate of the world, notwithſtanding the heathens worſhipped a multiplicity of inferior deities, yet in general they acknowledged a ſupreme GOD, in diſtinction from them. This is evident from profane hiſtory,* as well as from thoſe inſtances mentioned in the ſacred ſcriptures. It is clear that Laban the Syrian acknowledged another GOD, beſide thoſe whom he charged Jacob with having ſtolen. "The GOD of your fathers," ſaid he, "appeared to me yeſternight." The ſame is true concerning the calves ſet up at Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam. The people, indeed, paid their immediate devotions to theſe images, much in the ſame manner as the Papiſts do to the crucifix; but ſtill they acknowledged a ſupreme GOD, in diſtinction from them. Paul, in his epiſtle to the Romans, does not charge them with atheiſm, but with idolatry. "Becauſe," ſaith he, "when they knew GOD, they glorified him not as GOD, but became vain in their imaginations, and worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator." That is, as I conceive, they worſhipped their images and ſubordinate deities more than the ſupreme GOD, who

* Vide Banier's Mythology of the Ancients.

is over all, bleſſed for evermore. The altar which St. Paul found at Athens, inſcribed to the *unknown* GOD, appears to me, notwithſtanding all which commentators have ſaid upon it, to be a full acknowledgment of their belief of the exiſtence of a ſupreme GOD, although they had loſt the knowledge of his true character.

WILL you indulge me, my brethren, to relate the reflections of one of the rude inhabitants of the North, a wild Greenlander? "It is true, (ſaid he to a miſſionary) we were ignorant heathens, and knew nothing of GOD, or a Saviour; and indeed who ſhould tell us of him until you come. But thou muſt not imagine that no Greenlander thinks about theſe things. I myſelf have often thought that a *kajak*, (a boat) with all its tackle and implements, does not grow into exiſtence of itſelf; but muſt be made by the ingenuity of man. Now the meaneſt bird has far more ſkill diſplayed in its ſtructure than the beſt *kajak*, and no man can make a bird. But there is ſtill far greater art ſhewn in the formation of man, than of any other creature. Who was it that made him? I bethought me he proceeded from his parents, and they from their parents: but ſome muſt have been the firſt parents—Whence did they come? Common report informs me, they grew out of the earth; but if ſo, why does it not ſtill happen that men grow out of the earth? And from whence did this ſame earth itſelf, the ſea, the ſun, the moon, and ſtars, ariſe into exiſtence? Certainly there muſt be ſome Being who made all theſe things—a Being that always was, and can never ceaſe to be. He muſt be inexpreſſibly more mighty, knowing, and wiſe, than the wiſeſt man. He muſt be very good, too; becauſe that every thing which he has made is good, uſeful, and neceſſary for us. Ah! did I but know him, how would I love and honour him! But who has ſeen him? None of us poor men. Yet there may be men, too, that know ſomething of him. O that I could ſpeak with ſuch!——Therefore," ſaid he,

"as ſoon as I heard you ſpeak of this great Being, I believed it directly with all my heart, becauſe I had ſo long deſired to hear it."*

THE ſavages of America, who roam in our weſtern foreſts, in general acknowledge the exiſtence of the *Great SPIRIT;* although they are ſaid to worſhip the devil, to keep him from hurting them. Hence it appears, that in every country, in every age and nation, a Supreme Being has generally been acknowledged. This has juſtly been conſidered as the great principle of national confidence. And indeed, what confidence can be put in engagements, oaths, and treaties, where the exiſtence of GOD and future accountability are not acknowledged, is, at beſt, quite problematical.

BUT in addition to what has already been mentioned, the people of GOD in every age have been living witneſſes for him. They have teſtified of his power and goodneſs, of his truth and faithfulneſs, to the children of men. Thoſe who have borne witneſs to the Divine Character, are not a few. We are compaſſed about on every ſide with a cloud of witneſſes. They riſe to our view numerous as the multitude which John ſaw in heaven, that no man could number. I have only time to ſelect a few.

WHAT a noble teſtimony did Enoch bear to the character of GOD, by his living obedience to the precepts of truth; by his holy life in walking with GOD; by his foretelling the coming of the LORD; by the witneſs which he obtained that he pleaſed GOD; and by his being tranſlated to glory without ſeeing death!

HOW convincing the teſtimony of Noah, the father of the new world. He witneſſed to the holineſs, the juſtice, and the faithfulneſs of GOD, in preaching the neceſſity of righteouſneſs to that ungodly generation, and in perſevering in building the ark an hundred and twenty years before the flood. By

* Crantz's Hiſtory of Greenland, in Gill.

that awful cataſtrophe, God ſet a ſeal to his teſtimony. The windows of heaven were at length opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. The aſtoniſhed world now ſaw, that what Noah had told them about his God was true. The warnings which they had treated as idle tales, now began to aſſume a more ſerious aſpect. All appeared reality. The flood was riſing on every ſide. "In vain did man think of flying for ſafety to the lofty mountains. Thouſands of torrents ruſhed down their ſides, and mingled the confuſed noiſe of their waters with the howling of the winds and the roaring of the thunder. Black tempeſts gathered round their ſummits, and diffuſed a night of horror in the very midſt of day. In vain does he turn an eager eye towards heaven; he perceives nothing in the whole circuit of the horizon, but piles of dark clouds heaped upon each other; a pale glare here and there furrows their gloomy and endleſs battalions; and the orb of day, veiled by their lurid coruſcations, emits ſcarcely light ſufficient to afford a glimpſe in the firmament of his bloody diſk wading through new conſtellations."* The waters increaſe on every ſide. The flood ſwells, and bears down every thing before it. "Cities, palaces, majeſtic pyramids, triumphal arches," all the labour of ages, and all the monuments of art, are buried in undiſtinguiſhed ruin. But when the proud waves lift themſelves up, Noah's God ſits in awful majeſty upon the circle of the univerſe, directing the wild uproar of the mad elements. He again gathers the waters in the hollow of his hand, and pours them into the boſom of the ocean. He commands, and the ſtormy winds forget their fury, and ceaſe to howl. All again is quiet. The ſun once more ſheds his cheering rays upon the drowned earth; the reſplendent bow appears in the heavens, as a peaceful ſign to ſinful man, that the waters ſhould no more go over the earth; but a ſtill more intereſting ſign to the believer, that "God will no more be wroth with him, nor rebuke him."

* Studies of Nature.

WHAT an illuſtrious teſtimony did Abraham bear to the true character of GOD, in every country where he ſojourned! The fear of the LORD fell upon the people, and the ſurrounding neighbourhood was often bleſſed for his ſake. The affecting ſcene upon Mount Moriah, abundantly manifeſted the truth and faithfulneſs of GOD, and Abraham's unſhaken confidence in the divine faithfulneſs. Nor did his heroic conduct on the plains of Sodom give a leſs convincing evidence of his truſt in the great JEHOVAH. Here we behold him with a little band, compoſed of only three hundred and eighteen of his houſehold ſervants, and three volunteers, purſuing, and entirely defeating the combined army of four victorious kings, and reſcuing five more, together with his nephew Lot. With what true greatneſs of ſoul does he appear, when refuſing to accept the ſpoil which was generouſly offered to him—teſtifying to his aſtoniſhed neighbours, that he had a portion in GOD far ſuperior to all the treaſures of this world! Give me the perſons, ſaid the king of Sodom, and take the goods to thyſelf. "No," ſaid Abraham, "I have lifted up mine hand unto the LORD, the Moſt High GOD, poſſeſſor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread to a ſhoe-latchet." But he did not go unrewarded; for "after theſe things, the word of the LORD came to him in a viſion, ſaying, Fear not, Abram, for *I AM thy ſhield and thy exceeding great reward.*"

BUT whom do we ſee yonder, appearing in ſuch princely ſtyle, poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a palace? It is Moſes!—Behold him deſpiſing the ſplendours of a royal court, and "refuſing to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter; chooſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of GOD, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon." "He endured as *ſeeing Him who is inviſible.*" After forty years' exile in Midian, we behold him returning with the rod of GOD in his hand, aſſerting his commiſſion from the great I AM, to deliver Iſrael, before the atheiſtical

tyrant of Egypt; and, by conviction addreſſed to his ſenſes, obliging him at laſt to acknowledge that GOD, whoſe character he had held in the utmoſt contempt.

WITH what awful ſolemnity do we hear Moſes appealing to the inviſible GOD, to decide a dangerous controverſy between him, and Korah and his coadjutors! "To-morrow," ſaid Moſes, "GOD ſhall decide the matter." The day arrives; the tribes aſſemble at the door of the tabernacle; the glory of the LORD appears; terror and anxiety ſit ſilent on every countenance;—at length GOD ſpeaks!—Moſes and Aaron fall proſtrate to the earth, and ſupplicate. "Go," ſaid GOD to Moſes, "command the congregation to ſeparate themſelves from theſe bold tranſgreſſors"---(awful emblem of the laſt day!) "Hereby," ſaid Moſes, "ſhall ye know that the LORD hath ſent me to do all theſe works. If theſe men die the common death of all men, or if they be viſited after the viſitation of all men, then the LORD hath not ſpoken by me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and ſwallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit, then ye ſhall underſtand that theſe men have provoked the LORD." The alarmed congregation had no ſooner retired, than the earth gave way under the tents of theſe wicked men, "and they went down alive into the pit, and the earth cloſed upon them!" How glorious does the GOD of Iſrael appear, in puniſhing as well as pardoning!

WAS it poſſible to exhibit more clear and convincing proof of the preſence and power of an inviſible GOD, than what Elijah gave to the idolatrous Hebrews? With what dignity do we behold him at Mount Carmel, ſurrounded by a hoſt of falſe prophets, who were patronized by royal favour; and there propoſing to put the matter upon an iſſue, which involved, not only his own perſonal reputation and ſafety, but, what was infinitely dearer to him, the cauſe of GOD and truth. "Chooſe you one bullock," ſaid he, "and I

will chooſe another, and we will dreſs them and lay them upon wood, but put no fire under; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God that anſwereth by fire, let him be GOD." The propoſal was accepted; and Baal's prophets, that they might, if poſſible, ſucceed, took the day before them, and called upon their ſleeping, ſenſeleſs god, from morning until evening, but there was no anſwer. At the time of the offering the evening ſacrifice, Elijah "took twelve ſtones, and built an altar in the name of the LORD." He prepared his bullock, and laid it in order upon the wood; and after having the altar thrice drenched in water, ſo as to prevent the poſſibility of fraud, we behold the adoring Tiſhbite drawing near to his GOD! Let us mark the manner of his addreſs.—"LORD GOD of Abraham, Iſaac, and of Iſrael, let it be known this day that thou art GOD in Iſrael, and that I am thy ſervant, and that I have done all theſe things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the LORD GOD, and that thou haſt turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and conſumed the burnt-ſacrifice, and the wood, and the ſtones, and the duſt, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people ſaw it, they fell on their faces; and they ſaid, The LORD, he is the GOD; the LORD, he is the GOD."

I WILL add only one inſtance more.

WHAT conviction was offered to an impious monarch, by the three captives in Babylon, who teſtified that the GOD in whom they truſted was able to deliver them out of his hands! They nobly dared to deſpiſe the wrath of a king, and were unappalled by his raging furnace. Believing in GOD, they "quenched the violence of fire;" and triumphing over their blind perſecutors, left a decided teſtimony for GOD.

BUT I ſhould much ſooner fatigue your patience than exhauſt the ſubject; therefore can only ſay, that all the friends of truth and righteouſneſs, in ev-

ery age, have borne witneſs for GOD, both by their lives and by their deaths, that he is a GOD of covenant love and faithfulneſs. The word that has gone out of his mouth ſhall not return void. And do we hear him ſaying, "I will work?" It is ſettled in heaven—it ſhall be accompliſhed. I proceed,

II. To illuſtrate and diſtinguiſh the particular *work* intended in the text.

I CONCEIVE, by the expreſſion in the text, we are to underſtand either the work of providence or grace. In both of theſe the hand of GOD is manifeſt; and the former is generally, if not always, carried on with reference to the latter. All the great events which are taking place at the preſent day, however dark and diſtreſſing, we have reaſon to believe, will be finally overruled for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The wrath of man ſhall praiſe him, and the remainder of wrath he will wiſely reſtrain.

FROM the whole context it appears evident, that the work of the Spirit of GOD upon the hearts of the children of men, is ſpecially intended in the text. This is with great propriety called GOD's work. It is he that begins it and carries it on; ſo that in its riſe and progreſs, it is entirely dependent on the influences of his Holy Spirit.

SOME are of opinion, however, that this work is a mere mechanical operation, produced by the addreſs of the preacher, either by his boiſterous airs, or by his canting tone of voice. That ſuch an addreſs may affect the paſſions will be granted; but the work we are ſpeaking of, is quite a diſtinct thing from a mere operation upon the paſſions. The latter may take place without any connexion with religion; but the former implants a principle of divine love in the ſoul. The paſſions may be greatly moved by the repreſentation of a tragedy; but theſe impreſſions are only tranſient; they are excited by the circumſtances of the moment, and as ſoon ſubſide. We are willing to acknowledge, that if this "counſel or

work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of GOD, it cannot be overthrown."

THAT there is a natural diſinclination in mankind to the doctrines of the croſs, is too evident to be denied. This appears in their putting off the concerns of their ſouls, like Felix, for a more convenient ſeaſon. The moſt perſuaſive arguments made uſe of by the miniſters of Chriſt will prove ineffectual, unleſs accompanied by a divine influence. It remains ſtill true, that Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but if there be any increaſe, it is GOD who gives it. It is one part of the office work of the Holy Spirit, to convince men of ſin. And wherever we find a deep and affecting ſenſe, wrought in the heart, of the infinite evil of ſin, as committed againſt a GOD of ſpotleſs purity and rectitude, we may ſay to ſuch, as the apoſtle did to the Philippians, We are "confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt." The believer is directed to "work out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling;" but not in his own ſtrength; for it is added, "It is GOD who worketh in you, both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleaſure." I conceive that thoſe who apply this paſſage to ſinners, whoſe hearts are at enmity with God, and exhort them to work out their own ſalvation, and eſpecially without telling them that it is GOD who muſt work in them, both to will and to do—entirely miſtake the meaning of the apoſtle. The words were at firſt addreſſed to obedient believers at Philippi, importing, that all the good that was found in them, either in willing or doing, was of GOD, who wrought it in them.

THIS work of which we have been ſpeaking, is not a mere change of opinion and ſentiment, but of temper and diſpoſition. It gives a new direction to all the deſires of the heart. It detaches the ſoul from its love of ſinful objects, and kindles in it the moſt ardent deſire after the knowledge of ſpiritual and divine things. It places morality upon a ſure foun-

dation. It inſpires the ſoul with proper ſentiments of devotion towards GOD. It gives energy to all the benevolent propenſities of the heart. In fine, it has a commanding influence upon the heart and life, and by its ſanctifying operations upon the mind, prepares it for the everlaſting enjoyment of GOD in heaven. We come,

III. To conſider the oppoſition, implied in the text, to this work—"Who ſhall let it?" By this expreſſion I think it evidently implied, that there would be oppoſition.

BUT who are ſo baſe as to oppoſe ſo good a work? I anſwer, 1ſt. He who firſt oppoſed the happineſs of man in the garden of Eden. We muſt either deny the exiſtence of this malicious ſpirit, or acknowledge with the apoſtle, that he "now worketh in the children of diſobedience." Chriſt compared the human heart to a fortreſs, and Satan to a ſtrong man armed, who keeps it as his palace, until a ſtronger than he diſpoſſeſſes him.

2d. THE luſts and corruptions of our own wicked hearts ſtand in direct oppoſition to this work of grace. It is the grand deſign of this work, to overcome and deſtroy them: But they never expire without a ſtruggle. The law in the members will war againſt the law of the mind. If there were no oppoſition in our hearts, we ſhould reſign to the firſt call of the goſpel. It would be only neceſſary to ſet the truth before us, and we ſhould with the utmoſt readineſs embrace it. But melancholy experience demonſtrates, that we are "ſlow of heart to believe." Chriſt comes to his own, and his own receive him not. But,

3d. THERE is oppoſition from without as well as within. Infidels, and all the open enemies of religion will oppoſe this work. They attack the Chriſtian ſyſtem in different directions, and with different weapons. Sometimes they bring forward what they call arguments, and attempt either to diſprove the

exiſtence or neceſſity of this work. But their moſt common and moſt ſucceſsful weapon is ridicule. They have found by experience, that it is much eaſier to laugh at our ſentiments, than to confute them —to deny a propoſition, than to diſprove it.

Some who may be reckoned in this claſs, have gone ſtill further. They not only deny the Chriſtian revelation, but the moſt important ſentiments of natural religion. "To them, a Supreme Being is a chimera; immortality is unconſcious ſleep; and future reſponſibility the frightful offspring of ſuperſtition."* Theſe are exulting in what they madly call the *reign of Reaſon!* But, inſtead of preſenting that fair goddeſs, extending her mild ſway over the ſavage paſſions of man, we behold "the hydra of deſpotiſm riding in her iron car," her wheels rolling in blood, ſpreading deſolation and death through the world! But the conſideration that "God reigns, and that he will work," ſtills every fear, and calms the mind. But,

4th. This work will be oppoſed by ſome of the profeſſed friends of Chriſt, who yet, in reality, are ſecret enemies. Theſe diſguiſe the hypocriſy of their hearts under a fair profeſſion. St. Paul long ſince complained of falſe brethren, who came in privily to ſpy out their liberty, in order to bring them into bondage. And among the perils to which he had been expoſed, he mentions, as none of the leaſt, *falſe brethren.* Theſe may ſhow much zeal in contending for the *form* of godlineſs, and perhaps as much in oppoſing the *power.* A falſe-hearted, pretended friend, is capable of doing much greater injury to the intereſts of religion, than an open enemy. The deepeſt wounds which Chriſt feels in his cauſe, are often given in the houſe of his profeſſed friends.

But ſhould all the ſecret and open enemies of Chriſt, like the briers and thorns, ſet themſelves in battle againſt God, he would go through them, he

* Preſident Maxcy's Addreſs, &c.

would burn them up together. It removes every mountain, and diſſipates every cloud, only to hear him ſay, "I will work."

Two or three reflections ſhall cloſe the ſubject.

1ſt. Are not all who regard the character and cauſe of God, the ſalvation of their own ſouls, and the happineſs of the riſing generation, called upon, in this day of prevailing infidelity, to become living, active witneſſes for God?

And can you, my brethren, remain indifferent and unconcerned, while the enemies of religion are making every exertion to diſſeminate their demoralizing ſentiments, and inſultingly ſaying, Where is your God? Can you ſleep on and take your reſt, while the cauſe of the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of his enemies? Surely you cannot. Conſiderations of infinite moment call upon you to take a decided part, and fling your whole weight into the ſcale of truth. But you will not miſtake me. I am not calling upon you to engage in a cruſade to the Holy Land, nor endeavouring to ſtimulate you to propagate the goſpel by fire and ſword, as it was carried among the northern nations of Europe in the eleventh century; but would fain perſuade you to manifeſt a zeal worthy of the cauſe you profeſs to own. You will give the beſt evidence of your religion to thoſe around you, when you exemplify its doctrines in your lives. "If you love me," ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus to his diſciples, "keep my commandments." Let your zeal for God be alway according to knowledge, tempered with humility; and let juſtice and benevolence adorn your characters. Witneſs your love to your heavenly Father, by a ſacred regard to the Lord's-day, and the public inſtitutions of religion. Add to a good profeſſion, the influence of a good example; and above all things, have fervent charity among yourſelves, even that charity which is the bond of perfectneſs.

2dly. WHAT great encouragement there is for the people of GOD to be inſtant in prayer, that he would "revive his work" among us! He knows, indeed, our every want; yet he will be ſought unto by his people, to do thoſe things for them which they ſtand in need of. We have not only reaſon to believe that GOD will yet work, but to rejoice that he has already begun it. From the beſt obſervation which I have been able to make, it appears that there have been more revivals of religion in theſe northern States, within a few months paſt, than for ſeveral years before. I have information, which I believe may be relied upon, from about thirty towns in this and the adjoining States, where GOD has been of late, or is now, pouring out of his bleſſed Spirit. In ſome towns the work has been nearly general. Perſons of almoſt all ages and deſcriptions have been the ſubjects of it; nor has it been confined to any one denomination of Chriſtians.* The majority, however, in moſt places where theſe ſhowers of heavenly influence have fallen, has been compoſed of youth and children! Yet many there are in advanced life, who have been called at the eleventh hour, who can give a very clear and rational account of what Nicodemus, though a maſter in Iſrael, could form no idea of, *i. e.* "how a man, when he is old, can be *born again.*"

I HAVE lately received a very intereſting account from a place at the Weſtward, of a moſt rapid and aſtoniſhing work. No leſs than a hundred and fifty have been added to one church within a few months paſt; ſeventy to another, and a conſiderable number to another, in a ſmall town† of only ſix miles ſquare. This is the LORD's doing, and marvellous

* In Connecticut, this work has been principally among Congregationaliſts, (or Preſbyterians, as they are there called.) In this State, perhaps nearly divided between Congregationaliſts and Baptiſts. In New-Hampſhire, much the ſame. In Vermont, principally among the Baptiſts: yet, both in Vermont, and in Connecticut, there are ſome of other denominations. This ſtatement may not be very correct.

† Shaftſbury, in Vermont.

in the eyes of all who beheld it. Here GOD has literally ordained praiſe out of the mouth of babes! A number of children, from nine to fifteen years of age, have been brought to ſhout their young hoſannas to the great Redeemer! and a number of bold infidels have bowed the knee to KING JESUS, and owned him LORD, to the glory of the FATHER!

HAVE we not reaſon to believe, that a prayer-hearing GOD has granted theſe wonderful diſplays of his grace, in anſwer to the humble, united cries of his people, who on this day are offering up their fervent ſupplications, with one accord, for the intereſts of religion? In ſeveral places, the reformation has been evidently traced, in its beginning, to theſe ſeaſons of ſpecial prayer. And, my brethren, ſhall we not take courage, and pray without ceaſing? For Zion's ſake, hold not your peace. Let us not be weary in well doing; for we ſhall reap in due ſeaſon, if we faint not. Though we ſow in tears, we may reap in joy. GOD will hear his own children, who cry day and night to him; yea, in ſome inſtances, "before they call he will anſwer, and while they are yet ſpeaking he will hear."* And is it not the ardent deſire of our ſouls, that we may ſee ſuch a glorious work among us—that the LORD would pour his "Spirit upon our ſeed, and his bleſſing upon our offſpring?" Could we poſſibly have greater joy than to ſee our dear children walking in the truth? O that we may ſoon have occaſion to ſay, "Lo! this is our GOD; we have waited for him, and he will come and ſave us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his ſalvation."

3dly. Let me caution all who hear me this day, not to oppoſe this work, leſt they be found fighting againſt GOD. Are there any here preſent, who are under the power and dominion of ſin? Permit me to tell you, that you muſt either bow to the mild ſceptre of mercy, or to the iron rod of juſ-

* Iſaiah lxv. 24.

tice. Remember, that if you oppoſe this work, it is Omnipotence you have to contend with! "Have you an arm like GOD, or can you thunder with a voice like him?" It is the voice of GOD which ſaith, "I WILL WORK, and who ſhall let it?" "We then, as workers together with him, beſeech you alſo, that you receive not the grace of GOD in vain." "Be ye not mockers, leſt your bands be made ſtrong." "Beware, therefore, leſt that come upon you, ſpoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye deſpiſers, and wonder and periſh; for I WORK A WORK in your days; a WORK which ye ſhall in no wiſe believe, though a man declare it unto you."

To conclude. May the LORD, of his infinite mercy, ſubdue the unbelief and oppoſition of all our hearts, and work in us, both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure, a work of faith with almighty power. Then, indeed, will Chriſt be precious to us. His very name will be like ointment poured forth. We ſhall rejoice in the enlargement of the empire of grace; and ſhall join the pleaſing exclamation of the pſalmiſt, with whoſe words I cloſe. "His name ſhall endure forever——and men ſhall be bleſſed in him: all nations ſhall call him bleſſed. Bleſſed be the LORD GOD, the GOD of Iſrael, who only doeth wonderous things. And bleſſed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory.

AMEN, AND AMEN."